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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF RUSSIA. By JAMES MAVOR, PH.D. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1914.

Professor Mavor's truly monumental work supplies English-speaking readers with an orderly and analytical view of the development of the Russian people from the earliest times down to the present. Considering the length of the period that has to be traversed as well as the variety and complexity of the factors that must be taken into account, the author's treatment is remarkably concise: not a page of the two bulky volumes composing *An Economic History of Russia* is cluttered with superabundant detail, but each helps to outline a period or a movement by means of essential facts without any attempt to crowd these into theoretic unity.

Serfdom is, of course, the central factor of Russian history. Its rise and fall and its interaction with other social and economic forces are in a large degree explicable and at the same time explanatory of the successive phases of Russian national evolution. Indeed, in Professor Mavor's scholarly discussion the successive stages seem to follow one another with a sort of inevitableness. Nevertheless, the work has to be scientific rather than philosophical, descriptive rather than logical. Back of political and economic conditions there lie unexplained and perhaps unexplainable facts of human nature and of racial psychology. Viewed as a whole, the course of Russian history seems strange to Western eyes, even when all the determinable facts have received the fullest consideration.

It is remarkable that the earliest chief occupation of the nuclear group out of which the Russian people developed was not agriculture, but trade. Driven from their abodes on the northern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains by the invasion of the Avars in the seventh century, the dispersed Slavs occupied the valley of the Dnieper and its tributaries. Here they were situated upon one of the main arteries of trade, and up to the tenth century trade was so profitable that the Russians troubled themselves little about agriculture. Thus "the earliest types of Russian economic life were the hunter, the beekeeper, and the trader." Barbaric as the people then were, they engaged in raids upon the Eastern Empire and upon neighboring tribes, which resulted in an accumulation of slaves, and of these the surplus was regularly sold. Slavery thus makes an early appearance in the story, and not as a traditional institution mitigated by kindly custom, but in the form of an active slave *trade*. In addition, the Slavs themselves were subjected to constant pressure from neighboring races, and the *Variagi* (Swedes, Norwegians, Goths, and Angles) whom they employed as mercenaries became their masters, setting up their own leaders as princes, so that in the tenth and eleventh centuries a majority of the princely families were

of Variagan origin, although princes of native Slavic race were not unknown. On the whole, the early experience of the race would not seem to have been favorable to the growth of anything like national consciousness or a high conception of "human dignity." Slavery became the foundation of Russian society and it is significant that, in Professor Mavor's view, it was the accumulation of slaves in the urban house-yards which led in the tenth century to the employment of some of them in the exploitation of the land. Thus agriculture and estate possession developed, and thus grew up the doctrine: "This land is mine because the people who cultivate it are mine."

It is noteworthy, however, that the complete subjection of the peasants to the landowners was the result of an extremely slow process. It seems, indeed, as though progress in this direction had been unconsciously retarded, if not consciously resisted, by a sort of *laissez faire* tendency. In the thirteenth century the Slavs were once more driven from their homes—this time by the all-conquering Tartars. The region to which they retired was that of the Upper Volga, and here, of course, agriculture became the mainstay. Land took on a new importance, and at the same time occurred a breaking up of the old existence. Communities were isolated and social life had to begin all over again. There followed the so-called "period of the appanage princes"—a period in which hereditary tribal rights and the ownership of land were related to each other in a loose and somewhat curious way. The appanage system differed sharply from the feudal system, being, it seems, a more embryonic form of society. The appanage prince possessed an hereditary estate, but his right to rule was independent of his ownership of land. On the other hand, the landless prince tended to become powerless, and thus was forced into the service of some more powerful ruler. Within the prince's domain there existed a class of privileged landowners—*boyars*—whose estates were hereditary. These *boyars* served individual princes, administering their affairs and collecting their taxes, but it is significant that the *boyar* might leave his estate and serve a prince other than the one in whose domain his lands were situated without forfeiting his title to them. Subjection to the princes was thus, in theory, voluntary, while ownership of land created a privileged class with somewhat ill-defined powers. With the privilege of the *boyar* may be compared the peasant's "right of going away"—a right maintained up to a date when it had become the purest legal fiction. The peasant might always go away—*provided* he discharged his debts and numerous technical obligations owed to the landowner. In all this one seems to discern that in Russia from the earliest times "freedom" tended to become a technical term. Liberty was not a principle, but rather an accident of legal or economic status. Thus the distinction between free and unfree was prone to become blurred like the distinction between men of much and of little wealth. Almost every conceivable status was recognized, and a social system grew up that was at once complex and loose. In its complexity and elasticity there was no real safeguard for the individual, nor any real germ of national efficiency. Serfdom—slavery—the Russian state appears always to have been really at the mercy of these forces. Opposed to them was merely what seems a sort of good-natured unwillingness to interfere with the individual more than economic conditions and the necessities of tax-gathering required. Among the peasant classes, a communal way of thinking and acting, inherited perhaps from the early tribal life, helped

toward serfdom. Nothing, in fact, operated more powerfully to bind the peasant to the land than the system of paying taxes by "mutual guarantee." If the peasant went away, those who were left became responsible for his as well as their own taxes. The *Mir*, or village community, thus became an instrument of oppression rather than a school of self-government. Nor was there, to correct these tendencies, any strong leadership or any clear thinking about government or individual rights; there were merely disorganized customs and quarrelsome princes.

Unity was forced upon the people by external pressure. During the third period of Russian history, the appanage principedoms became united under the Moscow princes, and the people were spread over the Russian plain. The need of resisting the Tartars caused the compacting of the national group, and at the same time lands were granted to "serving people" in return for military service. Estates so granted were not heritable, nor did the possession of heritable lands necessarily imply service. Yet in time both forms of landownership became altered in character; hereditary estates became no longer fully heritable and estates originally granted as wages for service became conditionally heritable. Thus the ideas of landownership and of service became more and more nearly identified. The general effect of all the changes that went on at this period was to bind the landowner closer to the government and the peasant closer to the landowner by contractual relations of many and various kinds. The result was that a system of government elementary in theory and cumbersome in practice became fixed upon the Russian people. As time went on the growth of vested interests, the territorial extension of the nation, the increase of the population, the diversity of racial groups, the sheer difficulty of governing at all, obviously made it increasingly difficult to "change all that."

In the fourth period of Russian history—from the beginning of the seventeenth to the middle of the nineteenth centuries—the "dislocation" of Russian society becomes more and more apparent. The decay of the old *boyar* class and the increasing reliance of the government upon the newly arising class of *dvoryanstvo*, formed out of the metropolitan and provincial "serving people," was accompanied by a more definite stratification of the social mass. Such a condition reacted upon both people and State. "The State has assumed control of everything, and is therefore held responsible for everything. The burden of life which falls upon it thus tends to become intolerable and the deficiencies of government tend to become intolerable also." In attempting to superimpose Western methods and ideas upon the social system which had grown up, Peter the Great undertook a titanic, an almost impossible task. His reforms tended to arrive at a dead center, or to travel in vicious circles. For example, by means of the army which he built up and used for tax collecting, he merely "organized one set of free vagabonds to produce another set out of the settled peasant groups." Military service, too, was more restrictive of liberty than were some of the limited forms of slavery, and the imposition by Peter of the poll-tax fused all bondmen into one class. "Inscription upon the tax list was no longer the criterion of freedom; it became, indeed, a sign of servitude." Moreover, Peter's industrial policy, his determination that every one should work at some trade or business, led to the practical enslavement of the workers in the factories. Peter, in effect, attempted to accomplish the Westernization of Russia while still keeping

the people in bondage. In so doing he more sharply defined the contours of each class and imposed upon each "a heavier and more complicated burden of obligations." During the period of reaction that followed, the nobility was relieved of the obligation of compulsory service, while they retained bondage right. The bonded man or woman was, as it were, leased to the nobleman for the payment of a poll-tax, with the result that the rights of the peasant and the obligation of the landowner to both peasant and State practically ceased to be.

The facts of earlier Russian history as discussed by Professor Mavor form in themselves an explanation of the development of the nation into its more modern form, and furnish a background for the understanding of later tendencies and problems. Particularly in his second volume, the author, with political as well as economic insight and with no little power of psychological interpretation, describes the fall of bondage, the conditions which resulted from emancipation, the trend of political thought as expressed in revolutionary and social-Democratic movements, the position of the *Intelligentsia*—all the phases, in fact, of modern Russian life, so curiously determined and colored by the past. The student of economics and of world history will find in Professor Mavor's study of the important but little-understood history of Russia what has long been needed—a comprehensive and authoritative work upon this subject. The author makes use of the profound researches of modern Russian scholars, and in doing so he manifests unmistakable scholarship and critical ability.

ROMAN IMPERIALISM. By TENNEY FRANK. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914.

The view of Roman imperialism most commonly upheld, or rather taken for granted, is no doubt more open to criticism on the ground of superficiality than those who are absorbed in the details and particular problems of Roman history are prone to realize. Our ideas of the process by which Rome's empire was built up are almost inevitably colored by our knowledge of later European history and of modern European conditions. We instinctively take as fundamental axioms such motives as land-hunger, commercial rivalry, or that ambition for empire-building which is in part an inheritance from the Roman Empire itself. Upon the Romans, however, economic conditions did not bear hard; commerce for a long period was among them a factor of little importance; no awe-inspiring tradition of empire had come down to them from the past, nor were they interested in the propagation of a religion laying claim to world-wide recognition. Then, too, there has been the parallel tendency to identify the methods and ideals of republican Rome with those of Asiatic monarchies, which differed widely from the Roman State in that they were artificial groupings of many diverse peoples held together by the force of mercenary armies, and dependent upon conquest and tribute for their very existence. The more one considers the case in outline, the more evident becomes the need of a revision of *a priori* views and of a fresh examination of the facts. The early Romans were, for the most part, conservative farmers, living under a republican form of government; the *mos maiorum* did not recognize the right of aggression or the desire for more territory as just occasions for war. Moreover, to the Roman State, constituted as it was, victories meant fresh problems of administration rather than increase of